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ABSTRACT

A study was done at Western Michigan University of faculty and student perceptions of the effects of the baccalaureate-level writing requirements. The assessment was in two parts. First, a faculty survey requested information about: the development and evaluation of writing assignments, the relative importance of essential writing skills, typical kinds of assignments, and grading criteria. Second, a student survey requested information on the quantity of writing required in their courses and their perceptions of faculty grading and evaluation criteria. Of 815 faculty surveyed, 342 responded. Of 3,100 students surveyed, 1,797 responded with usable surveys. Results showed that 78 percent of faculty perceived higher-order skills such as analysis/criticism and organization of argument from sources as very important. The essay examination was the most assigned writing task, followed by short and long research papers. Of students, 60-62 percent indicated having written 5 or more papers during the current academic year and more than 15 pages for classes during the fall semester, 1991. Both faculty and students ranked, in the same order, the same dimensions as important criteria in the evaluation of written work. Appendixes contain copies of the surveys and description of the writing requirement. (JB)

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ED 363 152

Writing at Western Michigan University: A Study of Faculty and Student Perceptions

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A report prepared by the ad hoc committee to study writing and the effects of the baccalaureate-level writing requirement at Western Michigan University.

Committee members:

Larry tenHarmsel, English
Lambert VanderKooi, Electrical Engineering
Lynne McCauley, Center for Academic Support Programs (chair)

HE026 757

Submitted to the Undergraduate Studies Council
June 8, 1993

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Intellectual Skills Development Program

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

WRITING AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY: A STUDY OF FACULTY AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Abstract

A survey conducted in April 1992 to assess faculty and student perceptions of writing revealed that a high percentage (78%+) of faculty perceive higher-order skills such as analysis/critique, organization of argument from sources and formulate a thesis as very important. The essay examination was the most assigned writing task, followed by short and long research papers. More than 70% of surveyed faculty cited dimensions such as organization, development of ideas, and quality of supporting evidence as very important criteria for evaluation; 60% communicated these criteria to students in the syllabus or elsewhere.

Most students (62%) indicated having written five or more papers during the current academic year and more than 15 pages for classes during fall semester, 1991. Both faculty and students ranked, in the same order, the same dimensions as important criteria in the evaluation of written work.

To an open-ended question asking what kind of writing assignment most helped improve writing, students overwhelmingly cited some variation of "writing on my own topic," while at the same time denigrating the notion of "research paper" as mere repeating of facts or paraphrasing ideas. To a question on what use students made of instructor's responses to written work, students made it clear that they wanted more detailed comments and more opportunities to revise.

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A Study of Faculty and Student Perceptions

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Background

After consideration for several years, the Faculty Senate approved a baccalaureate-level writing requirement as proposed by the Intellectual Skills Advisory Committee for implementation in 1988. In addition to a freshman-level writing course (and a basic writing course if needed) all students were to complete a writing or a writing-intensive course as prescribed by their major program. Each major program was charged to develop a course or courses, either new or modified, that fit the criteria for "writing-intensive." Ideally, this course would be a subject-matter course required for the major. Writing tasks would be designed to provide students the opportunity to develop some fluency in the discourse of their chosen field as well as improve their overall writing skills.

At its October 8, 1991 meeting, the Undergraduate Studies Council appointed a subcommittee to assess undergraduate writing-intensive courses and to develop the appropriate survey instrument for this purpose. Subsequent correspondence from the Senate Executive Board requested that the survey also include faculty who teach junior- and senior-level courses to determine if they have noticed any change in the writing abilities of their students resulting from the baccalaureate-level writing requirement in all majors. In addition, the council was encouraged to request that all departments submit their operational definition of a writing-intensive course and their rationale used to determine which courses may or may not be designated to fulfill the baccalaureate-level writing requirement.

A subcommittee consisting of Lambert VanderKooi (Electrical Engineering), Larry tenHarmsel (English), and Lynne McCauley (Intellectual Skills) was appointed. The subcommittee met regularly throughout the fall and early winter semesters and conferred with Mary Anne Bunda, University Assessment, as they developed plans to complete the project.

Several assessment strategies, including evaluating writing samples, were discussed by the committee before they finalized plans for a three-part project. The first task was a survey of chairs of departments offering undergraduate majors requesting information about their baccalaureate-level course(s) as well as suggestions about how to best assess the effort. Using suggestions from chairs as to how best to proceed, the committee then decided upon a two-part assessment:

1. A survey of faculty requesting information about the development and evaluation of writing assignments, the relative importance of essential writing skills, typical kinds of assignments, and grading criteria.
2. A survey of students requesting information of the quantity of writing required in their courses and their perceptions of faculty grading and evaluation criteria.

The committee conducted the survey during April of 1992. Coding, tallying of open-ended questions, and preparing drafts of a report took place during fall and early winter semesters, 1992-1993.

Survey of Department Chairs

Chairs of each department offering an undergraduate major were sent a questionnaire which identified their department's writing-intensive course(s) and asked them to

a. explain why this course was chosen
b. explain the writing component of the course
c. judge the effectiveness of the course in encouraging a continued emphasis on writing skills
d. suggest ways for the committee to assess the university's success in emphasizing writing skills.

The response rate was approximately 85%. Chairs almost unanimously encouraged the committee to survey those who taught writing-intensive courses. Responses to the other items, for the most part, were carefully thought out and revealed strong support for efforts to improve writing.

Among the most common reasons cited for choosing a particular course to fulfill the requirement, chairs mentioned "suitable course content," "small enrollment," "part of major requirements," and "had a strong writing component already."

Three departments noted they had developed courses especially to meet the new requirement.

Displaying a true understanding of the dimensions of the requirement, one chair wrote that he felt "students in these [designated] courses could benefit from the 'Writing to Learn' approach."

Survey #1:
Survey of Faculty

A copy of the instrument is found in Appendix A

Surveys were sent to 815 faculty (including adjuncts and part-timers) who were listed by the registrar as currently teaching a course(s) with an enrollment of more than 50% juniors/seniors. Surveys were returned by 342 faculty for a response rate of 42%.

Demographics

Full Professor	108/31.6%
Associate Professor	84/24.6%
Assistant Professor	59/17.3%
Instructor	30/9.0%
Graduate Teaching Assistant	2/.05%
Adjunct/Part-time Instructor	47/13.7%
Unknown	12/3.5%

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

1. Five-Year Comparison

When asked to compare writing abilities of current juniors and seniors with abilities of from 1 to 5 years ago, 18% of the faculty surveyed indicated abilities were worse, 56% said about the same, and 16% said better.

2. Determination of completion of baccalaureate-level requirement

Eighteen percent of the faculty surveyed indicated they could determine whether or nor their junior/senior students had completed the baccalaureate-level requirement, while 75% indicated they could not.

3. Faculty familiarity with kinds of writing suggested and criteria for evaluation in department's writing-intensive (WI) course(s)

Fifty percent of the faculty responded that they were familiar with the kinds of writing and criteria for evaluation in the department's writing-intensive course(s), while 46% indicated they were not familiar with these dimensions of the requirement.

Of those who indicated they teach writing-intensive courses designed to fulfill the baccalaureate-level requirement, 92% indicated familiarity with criteria for evaluation in the department's designated WI course. While this datum is certainly encouraging, we are concerned about the 7% (6 instructors) who indicated they taught a designated WI course but were NOT familiar with criteria for evaluation.

4. Number of faculty teaching a course designed to fulfill the baccalaureate-level writing requirement.

Twenty-five percent of faculty surveyed indicated they do teach a writing-intensive course, 15% indicated they will teach such a course, and 52% indicated they will not teach a writing-intensive course.

5. Importance of selected skills

The next question on the survey asked faculty to rate nine writing skills as not important, somewhat important, or very important. The following table shows, in rank order, the percentage of faculty who indicated each skill as "very important."

Skill	%responding very important
analyze/criticize	86%
organize arguments from several sources	82
formulate a thesis	78
compare/contrast	75
describe a procedure	54
summarize from one source	47
express self creatively	40
describe an object or apparatus	36
achieve an authentic voice	34

The first five skills were rated very important IN THE SAME ORDER not only by the respondents as a whole as indicated above, but also by those who indicated they teach a WI course or will teach a WI course, and those who will not teach a WI course. Not only are the same five skills listed by each group in the same order, but the percentages indicating very important are virtually identical. Faculty are thus in substantial agreement that the following five skills are very important:

analyze/criticize
organize arguments from several sources
formulate a thesis
compare/contrast
describe a procedure

6. Kinds of writing assignments

This question sought to determine the kinds of writing assignments preferred by faculty in all courses, not just writing-intensive. Given a list of thirteen typical college-level writing tasks, faculty were asked to indicate whether they required the task always, sometimes, or never. While no kind of assignment was always assigned by more than half of responding faculty, the following chart indicates the percentage of faculty reporting "always assign" to each of the kinds listed.

Assignment	%always assign
essay exams	46%
2 to 5 page research paper	24
longer research paper	20
critical/argumentative paper	17
brief article summary	16
expository paper	13
lab report	13
case study	12
lecture/performance/other review	11
journal	9
annotated bibliography	7
book review	4
letters	4

It is interesting to compare the responses to this question by faculty who teach WI courses to faculty who do not intend to teach a WI course. Essay examinations remain the most popular form of writing task, followed by the brief research paper.

Assignment	%always assign	
	Teach WI	Will not teach WI
essay exams	55%	41%
brief research	32	17
long research	29	16
critical/argumentative	26	10
lab report	23	9
expository paper	21	7
case study	15	10
brief summary	14	14
annotated bibliography	12	5
lecture review	11	11
journal	11	8
letter	10	3
book review	6	3

In spite of the fact that a higher percentage of faculty who teach WI courses "always assign" a variety of writing tasks, the most assigned, by far, is the essay examination. This troubles us. While essay examinations are an excellent way for students to communicate what they have learned, and we are happy to see so many (41%) faculty who do NOT teach WI courses use them, we nevertheless urge caution in reliance upon essay exams as a primary tool to improve student writing. Essay examinations are typically NOT revised and therefore represent first draft work which is graded and then filed away. We remind faculty that essay examinations along with one research paper do not make for an effective writing-intensive course. More writing must be involved.

We note that WMU faculty seem very traditional in the kinds of writing they assign. Even in the writing-intensive courses, we note a low percentage of faculty using summaries, reviews, journals or other types of innovative strategies to improve writing.

7. Grading criteria

The survey listed fourteen common dimensions upon which writing may be evaluated. Faculty were asked whether each was not important, somewhat important, or very important in their grading of written assignments. The chart below shows a rank order of those criteria cited by faculty as very important.

Criteria	%very important
meets requirements of assignment	89%
organization of paper	77
complete sentences (as appropriate)	77
development of ideas	76
quality of supporting evidence	70
correct documentation	67
grammar (subject-verb agreement; pronoun case; verb tense)	66
sentence structure	61
punctuation/spelling/capitalization	58
organization within paragraphs	56
style/tone appropriate to task	40
vocabulary/word choice	39
originality of ideas	37
vocabulary size	11

We were concerned about the 10 to 25 percent of the surveyed faculty who did not indicate that meeting requirements of the assignment, organization, complete sentences, development of ideas or quality of supporting evidence were very important criteria for evaluation of written work.

8. Inclusion of criteria for evaluation on the syllabus or elsewhere

Sixty percent of surveyed faculty indicated they did include criteria for evaluation in the syllabus or elsewhere; 33% indicated they did not. We are concerned about the 33% of faculty who apparently do not communicate criteria for evaluation to students.

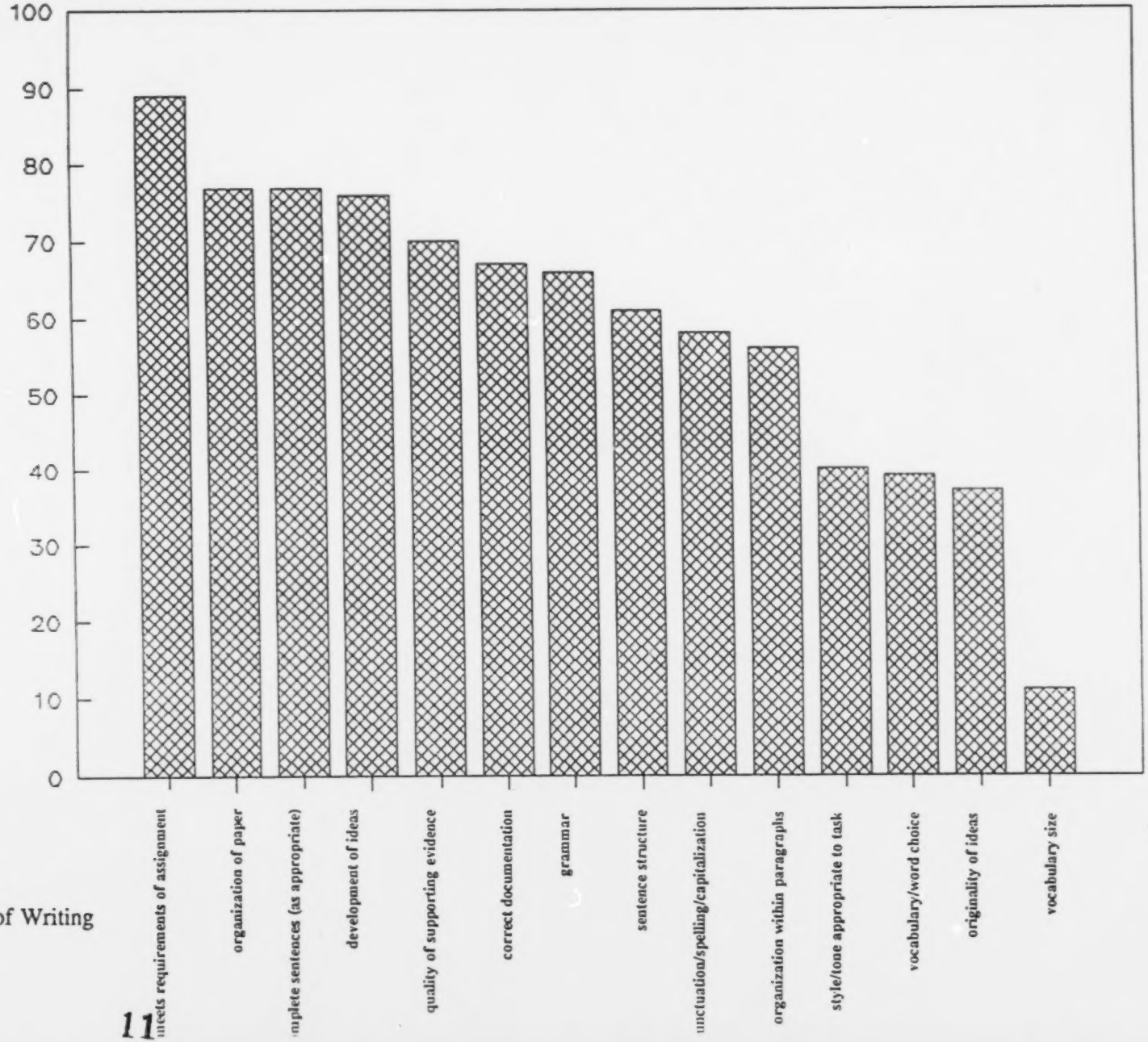
Of even greater concern is the fact that only 76% of faculty who indicated they taught writing-intensive courses also indicated that they communicated criteria for evaluation of written assignments in the syllabus or elsewhere. This means that 24% of faculty in writing-intensive courses do NOT indicate criteria, leaving students quite in the dark as to what is expected of them.

9. Re-writing or revision

Forty-one percent of surveyed faculty indicated that revision is not required, but is an option; 24% require revision; 30% do not require revision.

Because re-writing or revision is an important tool to improve student writing, we were happy to see that among instructors of WI courses, 40% required revision and 35% held it an option. Unfortunately, 21% did not require revision.

Criteria for Evaluation of Writing
Faculty Responses



10. Ungraded writing tasks

Fifty-four percent of surveyed faculty do not assign ungraded writing tasks; 17% have ungraded tasks as an option; 26% assign ungraded writing tasks.

11. Activities to improve writing

The survey listed four activities commonly used to improve student writing. Faculty indicated whether they made these provisions always, sometimes or never.

Provision	%A	%S	%N
require attendance at Writing Lab	2	32	59
comment in prose about student strengths & weaknesses	47	38	11
require revisions	8	55	32
confer individually with students	21	66	9

Faculty teaching WI courses required attendance at the Writing Lab in greater percentages than did other faculty: 65% always or sometimes required attendance.

Survey #2:
Student Perceptions of Writing

A copy of the instrument is found in Appendix B

Description of Sample

Faculty were asked to distribute the student survey in class; very few declined to do so. Classes were chosen from each academic department that (1) were at the 300 level or above and (2) had more than 50% upperclass enrollment and/or the largest number of upperclassmen for that course number. The number of classes selected from any department was in a proportion of 1:5 to the number of upper division offerings. In all, 3100 student surveys were distributed; 1797 usable surveys were returned for a return rate of 58%.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

1. Quantity of writing

Students were asked about how much writing was required on average in their courses **this academic year**. They were instructed to answer for papers, case studies, journals, book or other reviews, project reports and other writing tasks.

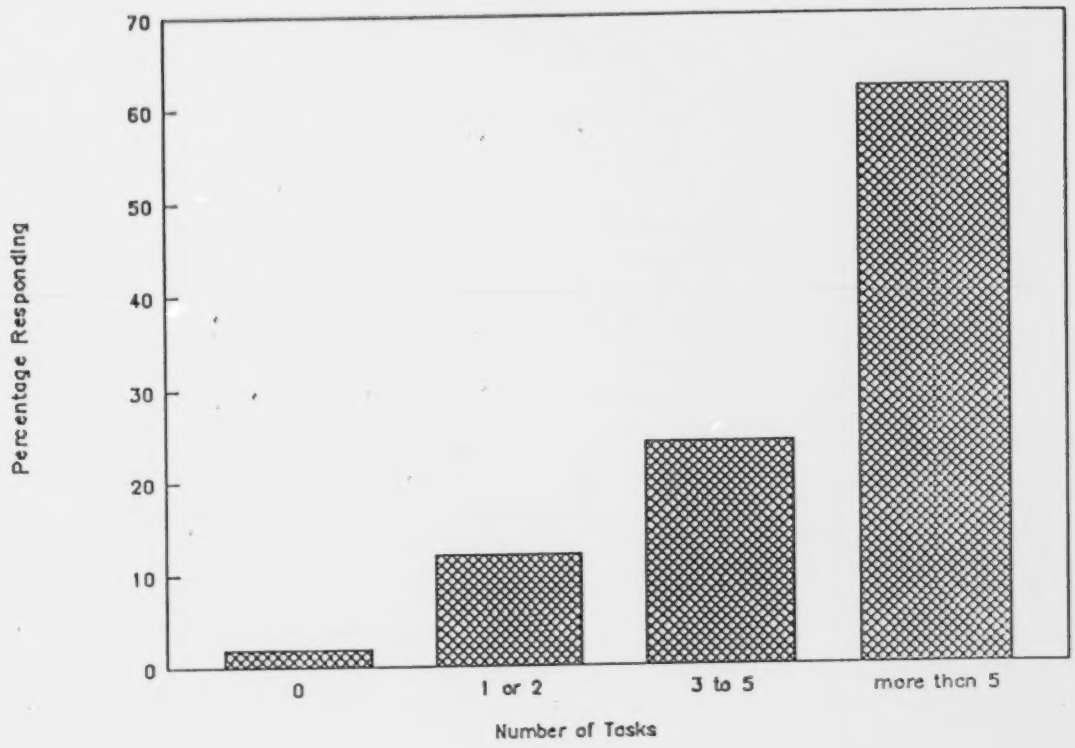
#tasks	%responding
0	2%
1 or 2	12%
3 to 5	24%
more than 5	62%

Are these numbers good? The only comparative data we have are from the Harvard Assessment Seminars, second report, ed. Richard J. Light (Harvard University, 1992) which indicated the following responses:

#papers	%responding
0	2%
1-3	4%
4-6	7%
7-9	16%
10 or more	71%

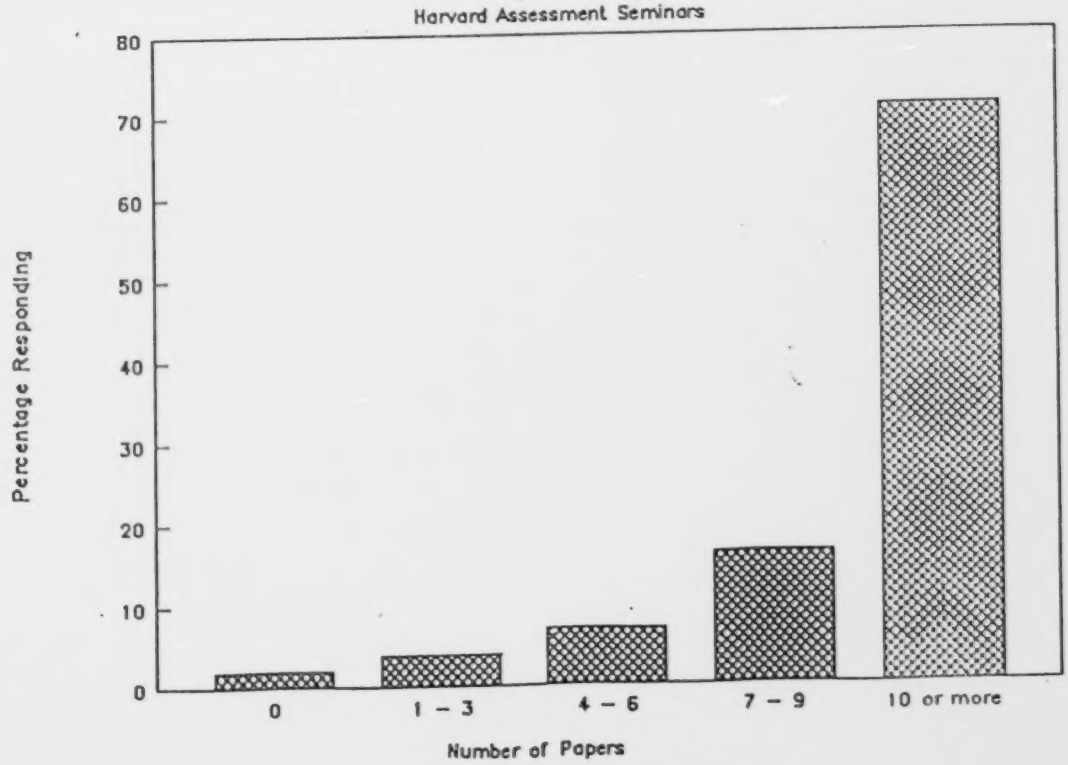
We did NOT include essay examinations in our list of possible tasks, although this does not preclude students from counting essay exams in the total reported. We conclude that 62% of students reporting 5 or more writing tasks per academic year is a minimum acceptable figure.

Quantity of Writing



Quantity of Writing

Harvard Assessment Seminars



2. Number of pages written

Students were asked about how many pages of writing they did for **all** their fall, 1991 classes.

#pages	%responding
0	3
1 to 5	13
6 to 15	22
more than 15	60

We have no comparative data for these figures; we conclude that 60% of students claiming to have produced more than 15 pages of writing during a semester is a minimum acceptable figure.

3. Returned papers

Students were asked to tell us about how papers were returned to them. They were given five options ranging from "not returned" to "returned with grade and substantial comments" and asked to rate each option always, sometimes or never.

Returned paper	%A	%S	%N
grade only	11	59	25
grade and brief comments	15	74	7
grade and substantial comments	20	65	12
not returned until final exam week or later	2	40	52
not returned	1	29	64

The ideal returned paper will have a grade and substantial comments. Twenty percent of students claim papers are always returned with grade and substantial comments; this seems a good percentage, especially when combined with the 65% of students who say papers are "sometimes" returned with grade and substantial comments. We need to be careful here, however, because "grade only" and "grade and brief comments" are also cited by students as occurring often.

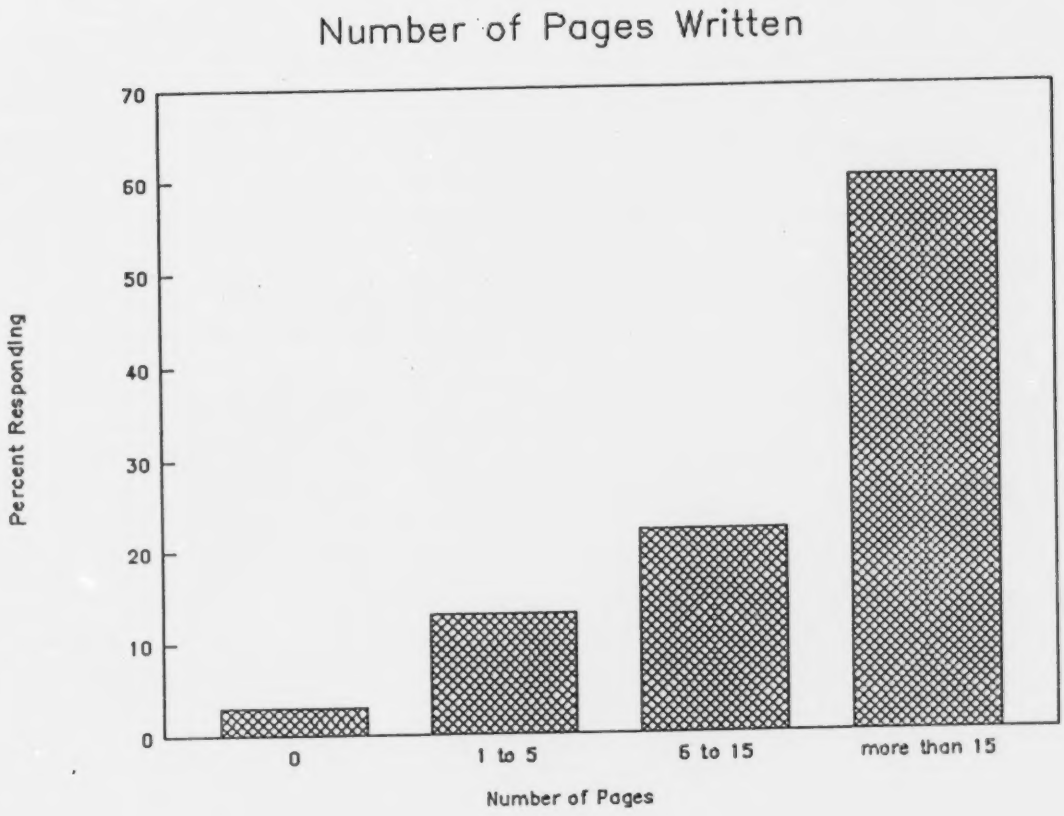
A disturbing figure is the 30% of students who claim papers are NOT RETURNED sometimes or always.

4. Drafts reviewed

Students were asked about how many drafts of a paper their instructors typically reviewed.

Seventy percent indicated "none; I hand in only my final draft for review and grade."
Twenty-six percent indicated "one or two drafts are reviewed and commented upon."
Two percent indicated "three or more drafts are reviewed and commented upon."

Of course, we would like to see the percentage who claim drafts are reviewed to increase.


Number of Pages Written
Percent Responding
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0
1 to 5
6 to 15
more than 15
Number of Pages

5. Perception of dimensions important to faculty

In an attempt to determine to what extent student and faculty expectations about writing correspond, we asked students to give us their perception of the importance of the same dimensions for evaluation that faculty were asked to rate. In rank order, students believed the following to be "very important" to faculty in assigning a grade to writing.

Dimension	%very important	
	student	faculty
meets requirements of assignment	82	89
organization of paper	67	77
complete sentences	64	77
development of ideas	63	76
quality of supporting evidence	61	70
punctuation/spelling/capitalization	60	58
correct documentation	57	67
grammar (S-V agreement; pronoun case; verb tense)	52	66
sentence structure	45	61
originality of ideas	39	37
organization within paragraphs	38	56
vocabulary/word choice	33	39
style/tone appropriate to task	30	40
vocabulary size	10	11

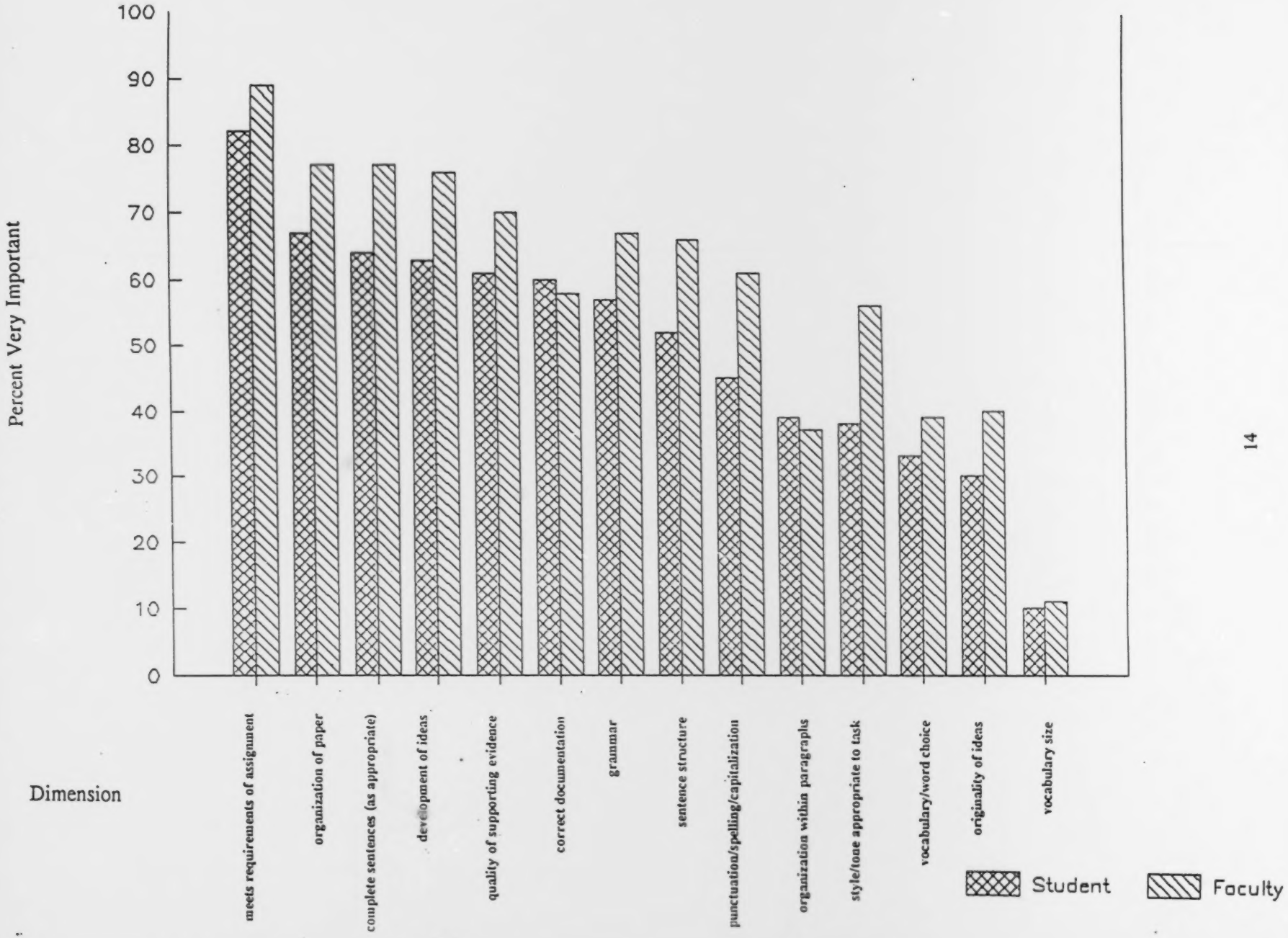
For comparative purposes, we have reprinted the percentage of faculty responding to this same item. Note that the first five items are cited in the same order by both students and faculty, indicating that students, for the most part, are aware of those dimensions of writing considered most important by faculty. This, we believe, is a significant finding. Consider the implications had we found substantial disagreement! Faculty, however, place more importance on correct documentation, grammar and sentence structure than students perceive to be the case.

6. Knowledge of baccalaureate-level requirement

Students were asked if they knew which course(s) their major department had designated as meeting the baccalaureate-level requirement. Fifty percent answered "yes"; thirty-one percent answered "no"; and seventeen percent were "not sure."

Only 50% of students surveyed knew about this important graduation requirement. Obviously, we need to communicate much more widely not only the fact of the requirement, but also the goals and criteria for evaluation of the requirement.

Perceptions of Dimensions for Evaluation of Writing



Open-ended questions

Question #1

Students were asked to describe the kind of writing assignment(s) they believe help them become more proficient writers. By far the most common response was for papers that required the development of the writer's own topic, ideas or opinions. Somewhat fewer students listed "research paper" or frequent, short papers. Many students mentioned "clearly defined assignments" and "clear outline of expectations" as helpful. A sizeable number also believe that turning in drafts after reviewing instructor's comments was most helpful. A smaller number mentioned reports and business-oriented writing (letters and resumes) as helpful, as well as summarizing exercises.

The items mentioned above were cited over and over again. A number of items were cited two or three times: article synopsis; analyze/argue a situation/text; highly structured papers; creative papers; papers with topic assigned; in-class writings; group reports; papers that are varied in topic or form; journals; abstracts; book reviews.

Some responses were obviously related to career preparation: lesson plans; technical reports; case analysis; mathematical proof writing; news reporting.

One student believed that the best way to improve writing was to "take four writing courses." Another said, "We need to write more and to higher standards. . . I save all papers on disk and make some corrections based on instructor input."

One notion that we found disturbing emerged from students' comments on "research papers." Too many students, in our opinion, revealed a faulty notion of research in that they insisted that "research" was merely a matter of repeating facts or reporting what someone else said or paraphrasing ideas. Students had little sense of the relationship between their "own" ideas and their idea of what faculty want in a "research" paper. Hence a great number of students wanted to do papers of "original opinion," or, as one student put it, "normal papers with more ideas and less research." Another student felt that a good writing assignment was one that "requires minimal research, but a significant amount of thinking of and presenting of ideas on subject matter of importance to the class."

Question #2

The other open-ended question asked students how they used the comments instructors write on their papers. Most students said they used comments constructively: to figure out what went wrong, to make improvements for next time, or as a guide to the instructor's expectations. Many students took the opportunity to tell us that their writing would be improved if papers had more comments and if they could be allowed to re-write/revise papers more often.

This question elicited a great number of negative responses. A common response was to "ignore comments" as not helpful, not understandable, or not legible. Another common response was that comments were not useful because "they supplied little detail" or "there were few comments other than 'good'." An insightful variation on this theme came from a student who said, "If the instructor actually indicates an alternative for 'poor' work, then I will follow through on it. Otherwise comments such as 'needs improvement' or 'lazy work' do not tell me where to change or how to change."

Other unedited negative comments on "how do you use instructors' comments" included the following.

"Tell the instructor what they want to hear and get a good grade"
"I hate writing"
"For instructors who can't speak English, the comments are only used for comic relief"
"They make me feel good when the teacher says something kind, and when something negative is said it makes me angry, but it doesn't change my writing"
"On long research papers the focus is always on how many pages - not the content"
"With a grain of salt"
". . . very few instructors give me the comments about my papers. They depend on the tutors in academic skill about mentioning in 5." [sic]
"I never had a paper returned with comments."
"I dont [use comments]. The comments are usually on the final draft so is my grade. Its too late to change anything."
"I find most instructors comments nearly useless. Most writing assignments are really just exercises in paraphrasing or library research exercises. Writing is almost never a creative exercise."
" . . .I hate it when my teachers don't give me any feedback because I don't feel like they're taking my work very seriously."
"I feel that I wrote more in high school than here at WMU."
"I took accounting so I would not have to write."
"In course X I received many points off for having comma's after and, but in course Y I got points off for not having them."

And, finally, we received this little lecture: "I think there should be a required grammer class for freshman. Too many student "slip" through the system with poor writing habits. Only having to do one or two reports a year. They do learn from there mistakes. I freshman grammer class will have benifits for the university, the student, and the society. A better writter will do better in life. Ever since I have been in college, I have heard is 'the writing skills are not as good as 10 years ago.' Lets do something now. It is up to you to change this." [sic]

This comment stings for many reasons.

Observations

Most (55%) faculty detect no change in student ability; an almost equal percent (18 and 16 respectively) indicate that writing is worse or better. Most (75%) faculty could not determine whether students had completed the baccalaureate-level requirement. Almost one-half the faculty surveyed were not familiar with the kinds of writing or the criteria for evaluation of their department's designated baccalaureate-level course(s). Nevertheless, faculty were very clear about what skills are important: 75% or more indicated analyze/criticize; organize arguments from several sources; formulate a thesis; and compare/contrast. This emphasis on higher-order skills seems somewhat in contrast with some students' perceptions of "research" papers as mere cut-and-paste exercises.

Faculty cited research papers, both long and short, and essay exams as the most popular assignments. Students did not mention essay exams, but cited "own topic" papers as a favorite assignment.

A significant finding of these surveys is the correspondence between faculty expectation and student perception of that expectation. Both groups listed the same five criteria, in the same order, as most important: meets requirements of assignment; organization; complete sentences; development of ideas;

quality of supporting evidence. Students perceived correct mechanics to be the next most important criterion, followed by correct documentation, while faculty cited correct documentation sixth, followed by grammar, sentence structure, and then mechanics.

Most students (62%) reported having more than 5 writing tasks assigned during the year; a similar percent (60) claimed to have written more than 15 pages during fall term.

Some 35% of students said returned papers always had brief or substantial comments; much higher percentages claimed papers sometimes had brief or substantial comments. Some 12% claimed papers "never" had substantial comments.

Most (70%) students indicated that no drafts were reviewed; final drafts only were handed in for review and grade.

About half the students were familiar with the baccalaureate-level requirement; half were not or were not sure.

Recommendations

Establish a faculty committee charged with implementing the following recommendations:

1. Increase number of faculty familiar with the baccalaureate-level writing requirement and with the department's method of implementation.
2. Increase student knowledge of the requirement.
3. Include criteria for evaluation on the syllabus and/or each assignment.
4. Encourage revision of written work.
5. Employ ungraded writing tasks as a method of improving writing.
6. Make better use of the Writing Lab for students with problems.
7. Include short, frequent assignments.
8. Point out specific strengths and weaknesses in each paper - especially as they relate to the higher-order skills cited as very important.
9. Rely less on essay examinations as a tool to improve writing. While essay exams give students another opportunity to write at length, they do not allow for as much feedback and revision as do short papers regularly assigned throughout the term.

APPENDIX A

FACULTY PERCEPTION OF WRITING SURVEY
WINTER, 1992

Select the option that most closely represents your opinion.

1. Compared to 1 to 5 years ago, are the writing abilities of your junior and senior students

☐ Worse ☐ About the same ☐ Improved

2. Can you determine whether or not your junior/senior students have completed the baccalaureate-level requirement?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Are you familiar with the kinds of writing and the criteria for evaluation required in your department's designated writing intensive course(s)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Do you (or will you) teach a course designated as "writing-intensive" and designed to fulfill the University's baccalaureate-level writing requirement?

☐ Yes, I do ☐ Yes, I will ☐ No

5. How important is each of the following skills in student writing? **(NI-Not important, SI=Somewhat important, VI=Very important)**

a.	analyze/criticize	NI	SI	VI
b.	summarize from one source	NI	SI	VI
c.	organize arguments from several sources	NI	SI	VI
d.	describe a procedure	NI	SI	VI
e.	describe an object or apparatus	NI	SI	VI
f.	express self creatively	NI	SI	VI
g.	compare/contrast	NI	SI	VI
h.	achieve an authentic voice	NI	SI	VI
i	formulate a thesis and develop/defend it	NI	SI	VI

6. Which type of written assignments do you typically require? *Please consider all of the classes you typically teach.* **(A=Always, S=Sometimes, N=Never)**

a.	exams with essay responses	A	S	N	h.	case studies	A	S	N
b.	brief summary of article	A	S	N	i.	book reviews	A	S	N
c.	brief (2-5 pages) research papers	A	S	N	j.	annotated bibliography	A	S	N
					k.	lab report/experiment	A	S	N
d.	longer research papers	A	S	N	l.	letter	A	S	N
e.	expository papers	A	S	N	m.	journals	A	S	N
f.	critical/argumentative papers	A	S	N	n.	other (specify) _____			
g.	lecture/performance/other review	A	S	N					

OVER

7. How important is each of the following items for your grading of written assignments. **(NI=Not important, SI=Somewhat important, VI=Very important)**

a.	meets requirements of assignment	NI	SI	VI
b.	development of ideas	NI	SI	VI
c.	organization of paper	NI	SI	VI
d.	quality of supporting evidence	NI	SI	VI
e.	organization within paragraphs	NI	SI	VI
f.	vocabulary/word choice	NI	SI	VI
g.	sentence structure	NI	SI	VI
h.	punctuation/spelling/capitalization	NI	SI	VI
i.	style/tone appropriate to audience/task	NI	SI	VI
j.	grammar (subject-verb agreement; pronoun case; verb tense)	NI	SI	VI
k.	vocabulary size	NI	SI	VI
l.	complete sentences (as appropriate)	NI	SI	VI
m.	originality of ideas	NI	SI	VI
n.	correct documentation of sources	NI	SI	VI

8. Do you include the criteria for evaluation of written assignments on your syllabus or other written documents?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Do you require re-writing or revision?

☐ Yes, I do. ☐ No, but it is an option. ☐ No

10. Do you assign ungraded writing tasks?

☐ Yes, I do. ☐ No, but it is an option. ☐ No

11. Rate each of the following provisions you make specifically to achieve the goal of "developing student writing," i.e. the activity concerns writing, not content. **(A=Always, S=Sometimes, N=Never)**

a.	require attendance at the Writing Lab	A	S	N
b.	comment in prose about student strengths and weaknesses	A	S	N
c.	require revisions	A	S	N
d.	confer individually with students	A	S	N

12. Please indicate your rank?

☐ Full Professor ☐ Associate Professor ☐ Assistant Professor
☐ Instructor ☐ Graduate Teaching Assistant ☐ Adjunct/Part-time instructor
☐ Other _____

Thank you for your time and insights

APPENDIX B

STUDENT PERCEPTION OF WRITING SURVEY
WINTER, 1992

Dear Western Senior:

As you know, the faculty at Western believe that proficiency in writing is one of the most important abilities our graduates can have. To ensure continued development of writing ability throughout your academic program, we instituted in 1988 a new requirement: the baccalaureate-level writing requirement.

We are now trying to asses its impact and we need to listen to what students have to say about writing at the University in general and about the writing-intensive required course in particular. Will you please take a few minutes and complete the questionnaire that follows? The instructor in this class will not review your comments. Please do not put your name or any other identification on the questionnaire. Your input is very important.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lynne McCauley
Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee on Writing

Circle the number that most closely represents your opinion or describes the classes you have attended at the University.

1. About how much writing was required on average in your courses **this academic year?** Answer for papers, case studies, journals, book or other reviews, project reports, and other writing tasks.

   1. 0 2. 1 or 2 3. 3 to 5 4. more than 5 tasks

2. About how many pages of writing do you estimate you did for all your classes **last semester (Fall, 1991 term)?**

   1. 0 2. 1 to 5 3. 6 to 15 4. more than 15 pages

3. Please tell us about papers that are returned to you. **(A=Always, S-Sometimes, N=Never)**

a.	papers are returned with grade only	A	S	N
b.	papers are returned with grade and brief comments such as "good work"	A	S	N
c.	paper are returned with grade and substantial comments	A	S	N
d.	papers are not returned until final exam week or later	A	S	N
e.	papers are not returned	A	S	N

4. About how many drafts of a paper do your instructors typically review? Circle appropriate answer.

   1. None; I hand in only my final draft for review and grade
   2. One or two drafts are reviewed and commented upon
   3. Three or more drafts are reviewed and commented upon

OVER

5. In your experience, how important is each of the following items to faculty in assigning a grade to your writing? **(NI=Not important, SI=Somewhat important, VI=Very important)**

a.	meets requirements of assignment	NI	SI	VI
b.	development of ideas	NI	SI	VI
c.	organization of paper	NI	SI	VI
d.	quality of supporting evidence	NI	SI	VI
e.	organization within paragraphs	NI	SI	VI
f.	vocabulary/word choice	NI	SI	VI
g.	sentence structure	NI	SI	VI
h.	punctuation/spelling/capitalization	NI	SI	VI
i.	style/tone appropriate to audience/task	NI	SI	VI
j.	grammar (subject-verb agreement; pronoun case; verb tense)	NI	SI	VI
k.	vocabulary size	NI	SI	VI
l.	complete sentences (as appropriate)	NI	SI	VI
m.	originality of ideas	NI	SI	VI
n.	correct documentation of sources	NI	SI	VI

6. Do you know which course(s) your major department has designated as meeting the University's baccalaureate (Upper division) writing requirement?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure

7. In your own words, describe the kind of writing assignment(s) that help(s) you become a more proficient writer.

8. How do you use the comments instructors write on your papers or drafts?

Thank you for your time and insights

APPENDIX C

THE BACCALAUREATE-LEVEL WRITING REQUIREMENT

Criteria for the Evaluation of Student Writing

In establishing criteria for the evaluation of student writing in writing-intensive courses, the Undergraduate Studies Council made clear that "instructors and departments are responsible for establishing criteria with regard to format, organization, technical vocabulary or diction, clarity, style, and tone which are appropriate to their respective disciplines and fields."

The official course-proposal form designed by Council also proposes the following easily assessable, if minimal, criteria as a guide to evaluating the more generic writing skills called upon by all writing-courses:

1. An ability to demonstrate maturity of thought, usually reflected in the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. (Specific applications of those higher cognitive skills to a particular discipline will be determined by the department or instructor.)
2. An ability to sustain the development of a point or idea over the span of at least 500 words.
3. An ability to signal the unfolding plan of a written passage by the use of organized paragraphs and transitional devices.
4. An ability to make conventional use of capitalization and punctuation.
5. An ability use regularly, if not faultlessly, the grammar, syntax, and spelling of standard written English, with particular attention to sentence structure and to agreement between subjects and verbs, pronouns and antecedents.

Criteria for Writing-intensive Courses

The Undergraduate Studies Council also approved the following criteria as defining a writing-intensive course.

1. One of the stated goals of the course will be to develop the student's writing abilities to meet the baccalaureate-level criteria listed above.
2. The baccalaureate-level writing criteria and further criteria specified by the department and the instructor will be communicated in the course syllabus.
3. The course will integrate several writing tasks into the term's work.
4. Writing will comprise a significant portion of the course, and evaluation of the writing will comprise a significant portion of the student's grade.

The key terms in these criteria include develop, specify, and significant. Many students may not meet all the criteria of evaluation at first; having had at least one semester of college-level writing instruction, however, they should be familiar with at least the generic criteria and should be able to demonstrate proficiency by the end of the course. In order to do this, students need to know what is expected of them; hence the requirement that criteria be communicated, clearly and in writing, in the syllabus. By definition, a writing-intensive course will require several writing tasks, NOT just one term paper, though one may be assigned, of course. The word "significant" was not further defined in order to give departments and instructor flexibility in grading. Just as instructors are free to determine how much

mastery of course content will earn a passing grade, so instructors are free to interpret the extent to which demonstration of writing proficiency will affect the grade. We trust that all instructors of writing-intensive courses will make these decisions mindful of the ultimate goal of the requirement: to graduate students who are competent writers no matter their field.